

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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MARKEY CALLS ON GOVERNORS TO STOCKPILE POTASSIUM IODIDE

Final FDA Guidance removes last barrier to plan

WASHINGTON, D.C. --

Today Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) sent a letter to the National Governor's Association, urging the Governors to request potassium iodide from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, so that the drug is available locally in the event of a successful terrorist attack on or accident at a nuclear power plant. In January, the NRC agreed to fund stockpiles of potassium iodide in states that request the drug, but was awaiting guidelines on dosage from the FDA. Yesterday, the FDA released its final guidance, which updates the dosage recommendations based on extensive study of thyroid diseases caused by the Chernobyl accident. "Now that the FDA has issued its final Guidance on potassium iodide, there are no more barriers to the NRC's program except a formal request from the States," Rep. Markey stated. "Potassium iodide is to radiation exposure of the thyroid what Cipro is to Anthrax," Rep. Markey explained. "Since potassium iodide must be taken within a few hours of exposure to radioactive iodine to be effective, it needs to be easily obtained by the people who live close to a nuclear reactor." Rep. Markey is the author of H.R. 3279, which would mandate stockpiling and distribution of potassium iodide as a supplement to sheltering and evacuation in the event of a catastrophic nuclear accident, such as one resulting from a successful terrorist attack. Potassium iodide has been proven to protect the thyroid gland from diseases caused by exposure to radioactive iodine released during a nuclear catastrophe. Children are most vulnerable to radiation-induced thyroid diseases because their thyroid glands are very active. Rep. Markey concluded, "The Governors now have the green light to take advantage of the NRC's offer and get potassium iodide into the communities that need it before they need it. This is an important step towards protecting the public from the threat of nuclear terrorism."

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